

critical digest

305 FIFTH AVENUE. N. Y. 17. N. Y.
MU 2-0326 T. M. KRAUS



March 2, 1955 Vol VII No 24 the Weekly New York City Theatre Newsletter \$25 per year

This Week

BUS STOP-Music Box 3/2
Whithead-Stevens present
Wm Inge new play With Kim
Stanley, Anthony Ross, Al-
bert Salmi, Harold Clurman
directed.

THREE BY THURBER-De Lys
3/7. St John Terrell pre-
sents 3 plays by Thurber &
Paul Elwood based on "Mr &
Mrs Monroe" stories. For 3
Mondays only. With Edward
Andrews, Roberta Jonay.

Future Dates

"In April Once" at Bro-
adway Congregational Church-
3/13 5 PM for 9 Sundays
...Once Over Lightly-Barb-
ixton Plaza 3/15...Three For
Tonight-Plymouth 3/21...Cat
On a Hot Tin Roof-Morocco
3/24...Triple Bill-Bijou 4/5
...Champagne Complex-4/6...
Ankles Aweigh-Hellinger 4/14
...The Honeys-4/14...Guys &
Dolls-City Center 4/20...
Inherit the Wind-National
4/24...Finian's Rainbow-City
Center 5/4...Damn Yankee-46
St-5/5...South Pacific-City
Center 5/18...Seventh Hea-
ven 5/22.

Summer Issues C.D.

Summer issues of C.D.
will cover tryouts of new
plays in Eastern summer
theatres as reported in
trade journals, daily papers,
and personal inspection.
Plus other features.

Digests of Current Week Theatre Reviews

Silk Stockings-Imperial 2/24. All but Kerr, Herald
Tribune, and Hawkins, World Telegram & Sun, cheered the
new Cole Porter-Abe Burrows-Mr & Mrs George Kaufman mus-
ical, produced by Feuer & Martin. Atkinson, Times, cheered
that show was on level with Guys and Dolls, having the
wittiest dialogue of recent years, Cole Porter's best work
and enormous gusto and skill in performance. Stars Hilde-
garde Neff and Don Ameche give a rousing performance in-
side a very funny book. Adjectives compiled by Chapman,
News, include handsome, slick, brisk, intelligent, witty and
well acted. Town's newest music magnet, adds Coleman, Mirror.
Talented theatre people have made an entertaining musical
comedy out of "Ninotchka" agrees Watts, Post. McClain, Jour-
nal American, is convinced musical will make Ameche a big
star all over again. In spite of the obvious physical items,
Kerr, Herald Tribune fears the show adds up to a piece of
show making of no very clearly defined character, which fre-
quently lags for lack of dances. Though Hawkins, WT&S, is will-
ing to admit show has moments, it behaves like a horse that
does not know which way to run. Show does not have wit
and charm of original film, Hawkins notes, alone in this idea.
Critic also thinks Jo Mielziner scenery for Paris is drab.

The Dark Is Light Enough-ANTA Theatre 2/23. Heavy, diff-
icult, obscure Fry, and first rate Katharine Cornell is how
the NY daily critics rated the new Fry play presented by Miss
Cornell-Roger Stevens. The star's limpid, civilized acting
shines through, notes Times man who believes Fry is now writ-
ing for posterity and not with much pleasure or enthusiasm.
Production is handsome, but less than perfect, sums up Kerr,
Herald Tribune. Chapman, News, quips that he would have trouble
with this one even with a seeing eye dog. An excellent anti-
dote for insomnia, pans Coleman, Mirror. Sole reviewer to find
true poetry in play was Hawkins, WT&S, but doubted if actors
were up to his high style. Play may have suffered, he adds,
from Tyrone Power's illness. Little would be lost if same
script was performed via radio, bets McClain, Journal Amer-
ican. Fry's play is lost in its own words, concludes Watts,
Post.

Playgoer's Guide Resumes Next Week-March 9 Issue

Playgoers Guide of C.D. will resume with next issue,
March 9. Ticket and critic data on NY and out of town shows
will be featured, and kept up to date weekly.

Controversy, a sure sign of spring in the theatre, is evident in a pair of law suits filed this week. Paul Douglas is suing Paul Gregory for \$1 million in damages, charging defamation and injurious falsehood in the abrupt cancellation of The Caine Mutiny Court-Martial in Pittsburgh Feb 12. While John Redgier and Richard Gehman have filed a \$200,000 suit against Plain and Fancy producers, charging copyright infringement. Pair alleges that current Broadway musical hit was copied from By Hex and Wonderful Good written by them in 1952-53 and presented in Lancaster, Pa.

PLAYS

Shows that closed include--Mrs. Patterson, Wedding Breakfast, and Peter Pan...Plain and Fancy moved to Winter Garden...Inherit the Wind will open at National starring Paul Muni...Seventh Heaven will open in NY week of May 22...Old Vic will return to US in spring 1956 with a repertory of works by Shakespeare, Chekhov, Sophocles, Sheridan...The Bad Seed will move to Coronet April 25...Small War on Murray Hill is name of new comedy by Robert Sherwood which Playwrights will present next season.

PLAYERS

John Beal replaces John Forsythe in Teahouse of the August Moon May 2...National company of Seven Year Itch switches places with NY company March 28, latter taking up tour then in Washington, D.C... John Randolph replaces Ray Walston, House of Flowers...Ed Begley will have a featured role in Inherit the Wind...Perry Awards will be presented March 27 at Plaza...At ANTA Album March 28 Helen Hayes will present a scene from Mrs McThing...Dennis King returned to Lunatics and Lovers after a virus illness.

THEATRE AD NOTES

The Saint of Bleecker Street said "Thank You" to public who responded to previous ads...The Southwest Corner said "Thank You" to Atkinson, Times, for filing a nice notice on show, which may be forced to close March 5.

THEATRE FILM NOTES

Shaw's Arms and the Man will be made into a film by Alexander Korda and Columbia Pictures, Alec Guinness will star...Paramount will buy film rights to Porgy and Bess for \$500,000...Carol Ohmart and Ursula Andress have been signed for film version of Kismet.

THEATRE RECORD NOTES

Damn Yankee original cast album to be out by RCA Victor...Ankles Aweigh rights have not yet been signed.

THEATRE BOOK NOTES

Ethel Barrymore's "Memories" will be published by Harpers on April 11...Whitman Bennett and Edwin Krows are preparing a biography of Lee Shubert..."How Not to Write a Play" by Walter Kerr will be published by Simon & Schuster in April...Vernon Duke's "Somebody Up There Likes Me" will be published in April by Little, Brown..."The Early Irish Stage" by William Clark has been published by Oxford University Press.

THEATRE TV & RADIO NOTES

NBC Radio will present sound biography of George Bernard Shaw in April...Boris Karloff will star in NBC TV "The Connecticut Yankee" March 12. Cast includes Eddie Albert, Janet Blair and Gale Sherwood...Greer Garson stars in NBC TV "Reunion in Vienna" on April 4...Lindsay and Crouse are working on a series of half hour comedy shows based on Arsenic and Old Lace.

CRITICAL DIGEST- weekly digests NYC show news, reviews, comments from 50 publications. Tickets, critics reports. Covers NY shows, drama books, drama records, theatre on TV. Also west coast theatre briefs. Special summer features. Perfect gift 52 weeks per year for "stage struck" friends, business acquaintances, etc.

\$25 per year for complete service.
Out of Town & NYC Reports, CD Newsletter.

Send to
Address
Subscriber's Name
Date to Send gift card



ROOM

DEPARTMENT

WHAT'S OFF BROADWAY...The program of the Off Broadway Theatre League which McClain, Journal American, would enlighten the public as to which groups are worth patronizing, was approved by the critic. Companies approved would have to be organized, by led by professional theatre people and pay its actors. This would immediately eliminate dozens of groups and save everybody endless travel and travail...Gaver, UP, discovered that the problem of definition of exactly which is and isn't an Off Broadway group is a tough one.

DRAMA MAIL BOX...Plays with small casts could visit Hawaii after their NY run and make money, a Times reader suggests...Cast changes for the evening should be posted outside the lobby, not made in semi-darkness of theatre, a CD reader suggests.

FAHM CLUB...Broadway's farm club, the Equity Community Theatre project of the Equity Library Theatre, is now in progress, notes Burr, Playbill. By routing four plays each season through a couple of high school auditoriums it (1) gives a chance for promising actors and directors to gain experience by displaying their wares before paying audiences; (2) brings the living theatre to thousands who might otherwise never have a chance to sample it; (3) avoids any competition with Broadway by offering only revivals; and (4) teaches its new audiences that no professional theatre can be expected to operate on a strictly charity basis.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS....Gretchen Wyler, Silk Stockings, is the hottest personality behind footlights in years predicts Farrell, Wf&S...It is a shame that Tonight in Samarkand could not have been kept out of town a little longer to fix it, notes Watts, Post...Second act of House of Flowers has now jelled, making it twice the show it was opening night, cheers Hawkins, Wf&S.

BOTCH JOB...Present production of The Wayward Saint is rated by Nathan, Journal American, as the saddest botch job of the season. The play is one of grace, imagination, cultured humor, a play of the spirit in which the faith and innocence persuadingly abashed worldly skepticism. But instead it is botched out of all its virtues by the amateurs of taste into whose hands it fell. It has been beaten by general incompetence, critic concludes, into an unrecognizable pulp.

INTERVIEW HI-LITES...James Thurber, whose Mr & Mrs Monroe stories will be presented under title Three by Thurber at De Lys, told Herridge, Post, that he is a vastly misunderstood man. He really admires women, the hope of the world lies in their domination. If women would organize and take over the government, there would be less chance of war, he insists. He only chides females when they fall below the perfection they are capable of.



PROS & CONS BY T.M. K.

Silk Stockings is a hit in which the portion of the book on the Soviet and the US views of the Soviet is much funnier than the rest of the musical. Songs range from fair to so-so, to at least one unmusical observer. The ending seems the weakest curtain line in years, bar none. No doubt it is a hit and chances are that the producers and authors will work to make even funnier and more topical.

Spring is the time of year when theatre owners do nothing about insuring summer business. It may be trite for us to complain again, and so early this year, but theatre owners never, but never, seem to learn the lesson from the motion picture theatre owners. Cool, cool air conditioning keeps the movies filled all summer. Hot, hot theatres keep the legit houses empty. The first legit theatre owner to put in a REAL air conditioning system will make \$\$\$.

BROADWAY



News

The Immortal Husband will remain at Theatre De Lys through March 27...Shoe-string Revue producer Ben Bagley is a 21 year old trade journal writer...Three by Thurber will play for 3 Monday Nights at Theatre De Lys starting March 7...Loneliness in My Shadow now selling tickets for next 8 weeks at Open Door 55 W 3...Originals Only production of A Streetcar Named Desire to give public previews Mar 4-5.

Digests of Reviews-Off Broadway

The Three Sisters production at the 4th St Theatre-85 E 4-was approved by 3 daily critics, and lightly panned by another. All agreed acting was first rate in David Ross presentation. Carol Gustafson, Peggy Maurer, Eileen Ryan, Morris Carnovsky, Philip Loeb were all hailed. Also okayed was Stark Young's adaption. Funke, Times, applauded entire production for effectively conveying the proper mood. Crist, Herald Tribune, found revival cast uniformly excellent. McClain, Journal American, thought fine acting added up to estimable Off Broadway entertainment. Personally, he admits, he is not a Chokhov fan, but he okayed it for those who are. All concerned deserve credit for a good try, notes Watts, Post, but he thought the whole failed to come off satisfactorily.

The Merchant of Venice revival presented by The Shakespearewrights at Jan Hus House-361 E 74- was approved by Times, Post and Journal American aisle sitters as a first rate job. While Kerr, Herald Tribune, feared it was on the dull side. Atkinson, Times, raved that it was vigorous, the point, end interesting. Thomas Barbour as Shylock, he added, is aggressive and exciting. Watts, Post, added that production was good, forthwright. McClain, Journal American, also okayed literal interpretation. But Herald Tribune aisle sitter, found all the performances dry.

The Ascent of F6, by W H Auden and Christopher Isherwood, presented by Markaren Productions at Davenport Theatre- 138 E 27- is a difficult play of ideas given lively performances, agree Beckley, Herald Tribune, Ferridge, Post, and Strassberg, Mirror.

New Palace show feature Roy Smeek, Lee Davis, Jay Lee, Pepper Davis and Tony Reese...New Radio City Music Hall show has Anthony Mordenie, Bruce Sidling, Patricia Rayney, and Mitchell Gregg.

THEATRE

BOOK



COMMENTS

"The Dramatic Event" by Eric Bentley, New Republic critic, was panned by by Down, Variety, for not being clear what audience it is seeking. Essays, mugg fears, do not stand up in print. Book is also in bad need of proof reading, he added.

"The Lady of Fashion-The Life and Theatre of Anna Cora Mowatt" by Eric Wollenecott Barnes (Scribers) was approved by Krutch, Variety mugg. Former in Times predicts that readers will be pleasantly surprised how interesting the story of the actress can be. Latter billed it as an eminently readable, yet authoritative book.

THEATRE

TV



COMMENTS

Emperor Jones presented on NBC TV Kraft was panned as distressingly inept by Gould, Times. The power and spirit of the O'Neill work was all but lost in a production of baffling confusion. It got off to a bad start and never found itself again. Ossie Davis in the title role seemed cold and detached, Everett SSlone as Smithers was too commanding, overshadowing the Emperor.

